

## The mission continues: New year brings new methods

Written by Scott Gray, President/CEO, Minneapolis Urban League  
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The essence of a new year is that it brings forth new opportunities and new possibilities for an organization to grow, change, and transform. January is the time when individuals as well as organizations reflect on lessons learned from the prior year, and use this wisdom for continuous improvement in the coming year.

Three years ago the Minneapolis Urban League (MUL) launched the Gateway to Opportunity, and as we close out our 2013 books, it is refreshing to see our vision has started to take shape within the organization. In these past three years we weathered a tough economy. We improved our program quality and production. We sought out and created new funding for our organization. We collaborated and partnered with new organizations that share our mission to change lives. We worked hard to remain focused on our mission and our agenda.

In 2013 we have had one of the best years I've seen at the organization since moving here. Our unaudited numbers puts MUL in the black. In fact, in 2013 MUL has exceeded its program production in nearly all of its programs. Our programs touched thousands of people and we produced 150 family sustaining jobs to help in the transformation of lives right in our community.

Our success comes from the commitment of our staff who have consistently gone above and beyond the call of duty to make this organization shine. Our board should be commended as well for their willingness to make tough decisions.

We know that there is much more work for us to do. What's next? What's new? In 2014, MUL must continue to build capacity to eventually double our job placement output. And I know we can do this. By 2016 we will transform the lives of 300 families by connecting them to a new career or enterprise opportunity. Specifically, we will kick off new initiatives like the 13th Grade, Neighborhood LIFT Project, MNSure, and a new job partnership in healthcare.

We are on a mission. To accomplish this mission, we will need to continue to be more innovative, produce more results, attract more partners, and simply to be more bold.

That will mean we will have to take some bold actions. In the coming year we plan to launch a multi-million dollar campaign that will set the stage over the next 3 years to transform and add capacity to our programs. We will transform the Urban League Academy into a Social Enterprise Academy, so that our students are equipped to create and lead their own businesses that serve their families and the community at large. We will create Urban League, Inc., which is

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our own social enterprise to generate funds to invest back into our organization.

This new year marks 88 years that MUL, a legacy organization, has served the Twin Cities. Yes, in 2014 the mission continues. To accomplish this mission, we will continue to need the community's support. We need to encourage large donors to support culturally specific organizations at a level that enables these organizations to make a difference. We need the community to embrace this new vision with your time, talents, and treasures.

Nelson Mandela once said, "Overcoming poverty is not a task of charity, it is an act of justice." He went on to say that every generation has the chance to be a great generation and I believe we can be that great generation.